

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2023

FIFTH LEGISLATIVE DAY

The House met at 5:00 p.m. and was called to order by Mr. Speaker Sexton.

The proceedings were opened with prayer by Bishop Edward Stephens, Golden Gate Cathedral, Memphis, TN.

Mr. Speaker Sexton led the House in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

ROLL CALL

The roll call was taken with the following results:

Present..... 95

Representatives present were Alexander, Barrett, Baum, Beck, Boyd, Bricken, Bulso, Burkhart, Butler, Campbell S, Camper, Capley, Carr, Carringer, Cepicky, Chism, Clemmons, Cochran, Crawford, Darby, Davis, Dixie, Doggett, Eldridge, Faison, Farmer, Freeman, Fritts, Gant, Garrett, Gillespie, Glynn, Grills, Hakeem, Hale, Harris, Haston, Hawk, Hazlewood, Helton-Haynes, Hicks G, Hicks T, Holsclaw, Howell, Hulsey, Hurt, Jernigan, Johnson C, Johnson G, Jones, Keisling, Kumar, Lafferty, Lamberth, Leatherwood, Littleton, Love, Lynn, Marsh, Martin B, Martin G, McCalmon, McKenzie, Miller, Mitchell, Moody, Moon, Parkinson, Powell, Powers, Ragan, Raper, Reedy, Richey, Rudd, Rudder, Russell, Shaw, Sherrell, Slater, Sparks, Stevens, Terry, Thompson, Todd, Travis, Vaughan, Vital, Warner, White, Whitson, Williams, Wright, Zachary, Mr. Speaker Sexton -- 95

EXCUSED

The Speaker announced that the following member has been excused, pursuant to request under **Rule No. 20**:

Representative Hemmer

PRESENT IN CHAMBER

Rep. Towns was recorded as being present in the Chamber.

**COMMUNICATION
February 3, 2023**

Senator Rusty Crowe
Cordell Hull Building, Suite 720
425 Rep. John Lewis Way, North
Nashville, TN 37243

Re: Council for Interstate Adult Offender Supervision

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This is a draft version of the House Journal and is to be considered UNOFFICIAL. It will become the official record of the House after it has been adopted by the House.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2023 – FIFTH LEGISLATIVE DAY UNOFFICIAL VERSION

Dear Senator Crowe:

As Speaker of the Senate and Speaker of the House acting jointly pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated, § 40-28-402, we are reappointing you to serve as a member of the Council for Interstate Adult Offender Supervision. Your term commences immediately and will expire on November 3, 2026.

I am forwarding a copy of this letter to Chairman Richard Montgomery of the Board of Parole. Chairman Montgomery's office will be contacting you in the near future regarding this appointment.

I am confident that you will perform the duties of office with the high standard of professionalism, dedication and integrity that the citizens of Tennessee deserve and expect of their public servants.

Sincerely,

/s/ Lt. Governor Randy McNally

/s/ Speaker Cameron Sexton

Cc: Richard Montgomery, Chairman of the Board of Parole
Emily Byrge, G-7 State Capitol Bldg.
Rick Nicholson
Kevin Johnson
Russell Humphrey
Tammy Letzler
Karen Garrett
Anastasia Campbell
Connie Ridley
Trey Jones

**CLERK'S NOTE TO JOURNAL
February 6, 2023**

Pursuant to **Rule No. 47**, the following bill has been reassigned:

House Bill No. 270 -- Students -- House Education Administration Committee

SPONSORS ADDED

Under **Rule No. 43**, the following members were permitted to add their names as sponsors as indicated below, the prime sponsor of each having agreed to such addition:

House Joint Resolution No. 161 Rep. Lafferty as prime sponsor.

**MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE
February 3, 2023**

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This is a draft version of the House Journal and is to be considered UNOFFICIAL. It will become the official record of the House after it has been adopted by the House.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2023 – FIFTH LEGISLATIVE DAY UNOFFICIAL VERSION

MR. SPEAKER: I am directed to transmit to the House, Senate Joint Resolutions Nos. 114, 115, 116, 117 and 118; adopted, for the House's action.

RUSSELL A. HUMPHREY, Chief Clerk

***Senate Joint Resolution No. 114** -- Memorials, Retirement - Tom Davis. by *Yager, *Lowe.

***Senate Joint Resolution No. 115** -- Memorials, Death - Evelyn German McClanahan. by *Walley.

***Senate Joint Resolution No. 116** -- Memorials, Death - Peggy Joyce Crouch Park. by *Walley.

***Senate Joint Resolution No. 117** -- Memorials, Sports - Millie and Macy Bromley, TSSAA Division I State Bowling Champions. by *Walley.

***Senate Joint Resolution No. 118** -- Memorials, Sports - Hardin County High School boys' and girls' bowling teams, Division I state champions. by *Walley.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE February 6, 2023

MR. SPEAKER: I am directed to transmit to the House, Senate Joint Resolution No. 179; adopted, for the House's action.

RUSSELL A. HUMPHREY, Chief Clerk

***Senate Joint Resolution No. 179** -- Memorials, Recognition - Tennessee State University Aristocrat of Bands. by *Oliver, *Campbell, *Yarbro, *Akbari, *Bailey, *Bowling, *Briggs, *Gardenhire, *Haile, *Hensley, *Jackson, *Johnson, *Kyle, *Lamar, *Lowe, *Lundberg, *Massey, *Niceley, *Powers, *Reeves, *Roberts, *Rose, *Southerland, *Stevens, *Swann, *Taylor, *Walley, *Watson, *White, *Yager, *McNally.

INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS

On motion, pursuant to **Rule No. 17**, the following resolutions listed were introduced and referred to the appropriate Committee:

***House Joint Resolution No. 153** -- General Assembly, Confirmation of Appointment - John Charles Wilson, State Forestry Commission. by *Lamberth, *Cochran.

House Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee

***House Joint Resolution No. 154** -- General Assembly, Confirmation of Appointment - Stephen Corbeil, Tennessee State University Board of Trustees. by *Lamberth, *Cochran.

House Education Administration Committee

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***House Joint Resolution No. 155** -- General Assembly, Confirmation of Appointment - Hal Bynum, University of Tennessee at Martin Advisory Board. by *Lamberth, *Cochran.

House Education Administration Committee

***House Joint Resolution No. 156** -- General Assembly, Confirmation of Appointment - Scott LeRoy, University of Tennessee Chattanooga Advisory Board. by *Lamberth, *Cochran.

House Education Administration Committee

***House Joint Resolution No. 157** -- General Assembly, Confirmation of Appointment - Drew Getty, State Forestry Commission. by *Lamberth, *Cochran.

House Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee

***House Joint Resolution No. 158** -- General Assembly, Confirmation of Appointment - Dr. Charles Doug Haney, University of Tennessee Southern Advisory Board. by *Lamberth, *Cochran.

House Education Administration Committee

***House Joint Resolution No. 159** -- General Assembly, Confirmation of Appointment - Caroline Ezell McAnally, University of Tennessee Southern Advisory Board. by *Lamberth, *Cochran.

House Education Administration Committee

***House Joint Resolution No. 160** -- General Assembly, Confirmation of Appointment - Doran Johnson, University of Tennessee Southern Advisory Board. by *Lamberth, *Cochran.

House Education Administration Committee

RESOLUTIONS

Pursuant to **Rule No. 17**, the following resolutions were introduced and placed on the Consent Calendar for February 9, 2023:

***House Joint Resolution No. 165** -- Memorials, Death - Mary Elizabeth Cotter. by *Moon.

***House Joint Resolution No. 166** -- Memorials, Recognition - Children's Museum of Oak Ridge, 50th anniversary. by *Ragan.

***House Joint Resolution No. 167** -- Memorials, Recognition - James K. Polk. by *Lamberth.

***House Joint Resolution No. 168** -- Memorials, Recognition - Dale Seals, 2022 Master Logger of the Year. by *Hicks G.

***House Joint Resolution No. 169** -- Memorials, Recognition - Jin Kyun Jung, Korean American Association of Clarksville. by *Johnson C, *Burkhart, *Glynn.

***House Joint Resolution No. 170** -- Memorials, Recognition - Chang Woo Son, Korean American Association of Clarksville. by *Johnson C, *Burkhart, *Glynn.

***House Joint Resolution No. 171** -- Memorials, Recognition - Sun Chen-Arirang, Korean American Association of Clarksville. by *Johnson C, *Burkhart, *Glynn.

***House Joint Resolution No. 172** -- Memorials, Recognition - Dr. Daniel Park, Korean American Association of Clarksville. by *Johnson C, *Burkhart, *Glynn.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTIONS (Congratulatory and Memorializing)

Pursuant to **Rule No. 17**, the resolutions listed were noted as being placed on the Consent Calendar for February 9, 2023:

***Senate Joint Resolution No. 120** -- Memorials, Recognition - Trousdale County Schools, Exemplary School District. by *Haile.

***Senate Joint Resolution No. 121** -- Memorials, Personal Occasion - Arzo Carson, 100th birthday. by *Yager, *Massey.

***Senate Joint Resolution No. 122** -- Memorials, Death - David Goodman. by *Yager.

***Senate Joint Resolution No. 123** -- Memorials, Retirement - Kevin Walden. by *Yager.

***Senate Joint Resolution No. 179** -- Memorials, Recognition - Tennessee State University Aristocrat of Bands. by *Oliver, *Campbell, *Yarbro, *Akbari, *Bailey, *Bowling, *Briggs, *Gardenhire, *Haile, *Hensley, *Jackson, *Johnson, *Kyle, *Lamar, *Lowe, *Lundberg, *Massey, *Niceley, *Powers, *Reeves, *Roberts, *Rose, *Southerland, *Stevens, *Swann, *Taylor, *Walley, *Watson, *White, *Yager, *McNally.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

On motion, the following bills were introduced and passed first consideration:

House Bill No. 1531 -- Lebanon - Subject to local approval, authorizes the city council to set the threshold over which public advertisement and sealed competitive bids are required for nonemergency, nonproprietary purchases at the level authorized by state law. - Amends Chapter 644 of the Private Acts of 1911; as amended. by *Boyd.

House Bill No. 1532 -- Lebanon - Subject to local approval, authorizes, in the absence of the city attorney, any assistant city attorney to approve as to form all contracts, deeds, bonds, ordinances, resolutions, and other documents to be signed in the name of or made by or with the city. - Amends Chapter 644 of the Private Acts of 1911; as amended. by *Boyd.

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House Bill No. 1533 -- Madison County - Subject to local approval, extends the deadline by which a tourism construction project must be initiated, from December 31, 2023, to December 31, 2024, as a condition to receiving funding for such project from the proceeds of the county hotel-motel tax. - Amends Chapter 324 of the Private Acts of 1980; as amended. by *Todd.

House Bill No. 1534 -- Anderson County - Subject to local approval, repeals act creating position of county service officer. - Repeals Chapter 396 of the Private Acts of 1947 and Chapter 358 of the Private Acts of 1959. by *Ragan.

REPORTS FROM STANDING COMMITTEES

The committees that met on **February 6, 2023**, reported the following:

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

The Government Operations Committee recommended for passage: House Bills Nos. 196, 197, 199, 200, 201, 202, 210, 211, 213, 214, 216, 217, 218, 219, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228 and 233. Under the rules, each was transmitted to the Calendar and Rules Committee.

DELAYED BILLS REFERRED February 6, 2023

Pursuant to **Rule No. 77**, having been prefiled for introduction, House Bill No. 1535 was referred to the Delayed Bills Committee.

***House Bill No. 1535** -- Taxes, Real Property - As introduced, provides that whenever Coffee County acquires property at a tax sale, any non-governmental entity holding a vested and duly recorded contractual right to the payment of fees or assessments secured by the property retains such right; further provides that Coffee County will be liable for the payment of such fees and assessments if the county makes actual use of the property purchased at the tax sale. - Amends TCA Title 29, Chapter 20 and Title 67, Chapter 5. by *Bricken.

CONSENT CALENDAR

***House Joint Resolution No. 149** -- Memorials, Professional Achievement - Beth Marks, Maury County Public Schools Middle School Teacher of the Year. by *Cepicky.

***House Joint Resolution No. 150** -- Memorials, Professional Achievement - Linda Bustamante Padron, Maury County Public Schools Elementary School Teacher of the Year. by *Cepicky.

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***House Joint Resolution No. 151** -- Memorials, Professional Achievement - Emily Fowler, Maury County Public Schools High School Teacher of the Year. by *Cepicky.

***House Joint Resolution No. 152** -- Memorials, Professional Achievement - Charles "Jon-Micah" Clanton, Maury County Public Schools Principal of the Year. by *Cepicky.

***House Joint Resolution No. 161** -- Memorials, Recognition - Robert J. Booker. by *McKenzie, *Lafferty.

***House Joint Resolution No. 162** -- Memorials, Death - Kellie Walker. by *Keisling.

***House Joint Resolution No. 163** -- Memorials, Sports - Coach Bruce Lamb, Tennessee Football Coaches Association's 2022-2023 Coach of the Year. by *Keisling.

***House Joint Resolution No. 164** -- Memorials, Retirement - Melanie Kent. by *Ragan.

***Senate Joint Resolution No. 114** -- Memorials, Retirement - Tom Davis. by *Yager, *Lowe.

***Senate Joint Resolution No. 115** -- Memorials, Death - Evelyn German McClanahan. by *Walley.

***Senate Joint Resolution No. 116** -- Memorials, Death - Peggy Joyce Crouch Park. by *Walley.

***Senate Joint Resolution No. 117** -- Memorials, Sports - Millie and Macy Bromley, TSSAA Division I State Bowling Champions. by *Walley.

***Senate Joint Resolution No. 118** -- Memorials, Sports - Hardin County High School boys' and girls' bowling teams, Division I state champions. by *Walley.

Pursuant to **Rule No. 50**, Rep. Zachary moved that all House Bills having companion Senate Bills and are on the Clerk's desk be conformed and substituted for the appropriate House Bill, all Senate Joint Resolutions confirming appointments on the Clerk's desk be substituted for House Joint Resolutions confirming the same appointments, all Senate and House Bills on the Consent Calendar be passed on third and final consideration, all House Resolutions and House Joint Resolutions be adopted, and all Senate Joint Resolutions on the Consent Calendar be concurred in, which motion prevailed by the following vote:

Ayes 92
Noes..... 0

Representatives voting aye were: Alexander, Barrett, Baum, Beck, Boyd, Bricken, Bulso, Burkhart, Butler, Campbell S, Camper, Capley, Carr, Carringer, Cepicky, Chism, Clemmons, Cochran, Crawford, Darby, Dixie, Doggett, Eldridge, Faison, Farmer, Freeman, Fritts, Gant, Garrett, Gillespie, Glynn, Grills, Hakeem, Hale, Harris, Haston, Hawk, Hazlewood, Helton-Haynes, Hicks G, Hicks T, Holsclaw, Howell, Hulsey, Hurt, Jernigan, Johnson C, Johnson G, Kumar, Lafferty, Lamberth, Leatherwood, Littleton, Love, Lynn, Marsh, Martin B, Martin G, McCalmon, McKenzie, Miller, Mitchell, Moody, Moon, Parkinson, Powell, Powers, Ragan, Raper, Reedy, Richey, Rudd, Russell, Shaw, Sherrell, Slater, Sparks, Stevens, Terry, Thompson, Todd,

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Towns, Travis, Vaughan, Vital, Warner, White, Whitson, Williams, Wright, Zachary, Mr. Speaker Sexton--92

A motion to reconsider was tabled.

REQUEST TO CHANGE VOTE

Pursuant to **Rule No. 31**, the following member desires to change their original stand from "not voting" to "aye" on **Consent Calendar** and have this statement entered in the Journal: Rep. Jones.

REGULAR CALENDAR

***House Joint Resolution No. 133** -- Memorials, Recognition - Tennessee pregnancy centers. by *Moody, *Reedy, *Bulso, *Vital, *Sparks, *Zachary, *Hakeem, *Leatherwood, *Shaw, *Todd, *Littleton.

Further consideration of House Joint Resolution No. 133, previously considered on the Consent Calendar for February 2, 2023, at which time it was objected to and reset for today's Regular Calendar.

Rep. Moody moved that **House Joint Resolution No. 133** be reset for the next available Regular Calendar, which motion prevailed.

SPONSORS ADDED

Under **Rule No. 43**, the following members were permitted to add their names as sponsors as indicated below, the prime sponsor of each having agreed to such addition:

House Joint Resolution No. 133 Reps. Zachary, Hakeem, Leatherwood, Littleton, Shaw and Todd as prime sponsors.

House Bill No. 68 Reps. Cepicky, White and Moody as prime sponsors.

House Bill No. 72 Rep. Jernigan as prime sponsor.

House Bill No. 163 Rep. Helton-Haynes as prime sponsor.

House Bill No. 164 Rep. Helton-Haynes as prime sponsor.

House Bill No. 249 Rep. Farmer as prime sponsor.

House Bill No. 331 Rep. McKenzie as prime sponsor.

House Bill No. 385 Rep. Gillespie as prime sponsor.

House Bill No. 573 Reps. Harris and Helton-Haynes as prime sponsors.

House Bill No. 606 Rep. Helton-Haynes as prime sponsor.

House Bill No. 634 Reps. Harris and Helton-Haynes as prime sponsors.

House Bill No. 759 Reps. Harris and Helton-Haynes as prime sponsors.

House Bill No. 761 Reps. Cepicky and Helton-Haynes as prime sponsors.

House Bill No. 785 Rep. Harris as prime sponsor.

House Bill No. 792 Reps. Harris and Helton-Haynes as prime sponsors.

House Bill No. 940 Rep. Whitson as prime sponsor.

House Bill No. 953 Rep. Davis as prime sponsor.

House Bill No. 1151 Reps. Harris and Helton-Haynes as prime sponsors.

House Bill No. 1213 Rep. Vaughan as prime sponsor.

House Bill No. 1249 Rep. Sexton as First prime sponsor.

House Bill No. 1280 Reps. Capley and Barrett as prime sponsors.

House Bill No. 1316 Reps. Harris and Helton-Haynes as prime sponsors.

House Bill No. 1415 Rep. Ragan as First prime sponsor.

House Bill No. 1416 Rep. Ragan as First prime sponsor.

SPONSORS WITHDRAWN

On Motion, Rep. Raper withdrew as sponsor of **House Bill No. 1413**.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE February 6, 2023

MR. SPEAKER: I am directed to transmit to the House, Senate Joint Resolutions Nos. 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 63, 64, 65, 70, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112 and 113; For the signature of the Speaker.

RUSSELL A. HUMPHREY, Chief Clerk

**SIGNED
February 6, 2023**

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2023 – FIFTH LEGISLATIVE DAY UNOFFICIAL VERSION

The Speaker announced that he had signed the following: Senate Joint Resolutions Nos. 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 63, 64, 65, 70, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112 and 113.

TAMMY LETZLER, Chief Clerk

ROLL CALL

The roll call was taken with the following results:

Present..... 96

Representatives present were Alexander, Barrett, Baum, Beck, Boyd, Bricken, Bulso, Burkhart, Butler, Campbell S, Camper, Capley, Carr, Carringer, Cepicky, Chism, Clemmons, Cochran, Crawford, Darby, Davis, Dixie, Doggett, Eldridge, Faison, Farmer, Freeman, Fritts, Gant, Garrett, Gillespie, Glynn, Grills, Hakeem, Hale, Harris, Haston, Hawk, Hazlewood, Helton-Haynes, Hicks G, Hicks T, Holsclaw, Howell, Hulse, Hurt, Jernigan, Johnson C, Johnson G, Jones, Keisling, Kumar, Lafferty, Lamberth, Leatherwood, Littleton, Love, Lynn, Marsh, Martin B, Martin G, McCalmon, McKenzie, Miller, Mitchell, Moody, Moon, Parkinson, Powell, Powers, Ragan, Raper, Reedy, Richey, Rudd, Rudder, Russell, Shaw, Sherrell, Slater, Sparks, Stevens, Terry, Thompson, Todd, Towns, Travis, Vaughan, Vital, Warner, White, Whitson, Williams, Wright, Zachary, Mr. Speaker Sexton -- 96

RECESS

On motion of Rep. Cochran, the House stood in recess until 9:00 a.m., Thursday, February 9, 2023.

**IN JOINT CONVENTION
STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2023**

The hour having arrived, set by Senate Joint Resolution No. 119, the Senate met with the House in Joint Convention for the purpose of hearing the State of the State Address from Governor Bill Lee.

The Joint Convention was called to order by Mr. Speaker McNally, President of the Joint Convention.

PRESENT IN CHAMBER

Rep. Hardaway was recorded as being present in the Chamber.

On motion of Senator Johnson, the roll call of the Senate was dispensed with.

GAVEL TO SPEAKER SEXTON

President McNally relinquished the gavel to Speaker Sexton.

On motion of Representative Lamberth, the roll call for the House was dispensed with.

RESOLUTION READ

The Chief Clerk of the Senate read Senate Joint Resolution No. 119.

GAVEL TO LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR MCNALLY

President Sexton relinquished the gavel to Lt. Gov. McNally.

Senator Johnson moved that the President of the Joint Convention appoint a Committee composed of five members from the Senate and five members from the House of Representatives to notify the Governor that the Joint Convention is in session and awaiting his arrival.

Mr. President McNally appointed Senators Briggs, Southerland, Stevens, Yarbro and Roberts.

GAVEL TO SPEAKER SEXTON

President McNally relinquished the gavel to Speaker Sexton.

Mr. President Sexton appointed Representatives Gillespie, Rudd, Rudder, Littleton and Camper. Rep. Gillespie served as Chair of the Committee.

BRIEF RECESS

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2023 – FIFTH LEGISLATIVE DAY UNOFFICIAL VERSION

Without objection, Mr. President Sexton moved that the Joint Convention stand in recess pending the arrival of Governor Bill Lee.

RECESS EXPIRED

The recess having expired, the Joint Convention was called to order by Mr. President Sexton.

Representative Gillespie stated, “Mr. President, the escort committee is proud to welcome Bill Lee, the 50th Governor of the Great State of Tennessee.”

STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS BY GOVERNOR BILL LEE FEBRUARY 6, 2023

Thank you all, very, very much. Lieutenant Governor McNally, Speaker Sexton, Speaker Pro Tem Haile, Speaker Pro Tem Marsh, Members of the 113th General Assembly, Constitutional Officers, Justices, cabinet members, staff and, my family, thank you for being here, friends.

I'm proud to serve Tennessee alongside you as we serve the people that we love so much.

And to those of you who are new to this General Assembly, I want to welcome you, and thank you. You have accepted a call to serve, and I have come to realize just how valuable and how important that is. You may or may not agree with everything that everyone does in this hall, you certainly won't. But I can tell you that I genuinely look forward to working with you as we serve the people of this state. To those of you who are new to this Assembly, you have accepted a high calling, and I want to say thank you.

Being Governor of this state is the honor of my life. And it's infinitely more rewarding to serve with a wonderful First Lady by my side.

But she cannot be here tonight, she wishes that she could. She is starting on the next stage of her journey, and we want to thank all of you – in this chamber and all across the state – who have reached out to us, who have prayed for us, and who have supported us, along with many Tennesseans who go through trial.

It means the world to me and to Maria. From the bottom of her heart as she watches remotely, and mine, thank you very much.

Two weeks ago, I took an oath to uphold and defend the constitutions of Tennessee and the United States of America.

As I said on Inauguration Day – this halfway point is a good time to reflect, but it's an even better time to plan.

Because our state is leading the nation, the nation has great expectations for us. What will future generations say about Tennessee in the year 2023 and beyond?

As a seventh-generation Tennessean, I often think about the role that our state and her people have played in the great turning points of American history. From the courage of early settlers and abolitionists, to the leaders of Women's Suffrage and Civil Rights

movement, Tennesseans have long served as a guiding light in our nation's moments of transformation.

One of the best examples is a man from rural Tennessee who was drafted to serve this country in World War One.

On October 8, 1918, Alvin C. York stood behind enemy lines on the Western Front. His platoon had suffered heavy casualties. In fact, there were only seven men left with him and they were outnumbered by hundreds of Germans. But Sergeant York took command of the seven American soldiers and won the battle. That day, a rural Tennessean earned the Congressional Medal of Honor and returned home to Fentress County, an American hero. Sergeant York stepped up to lead when our country was counting on him.

And tonight, we're fortunate to be joined by his grandchildren. Retired Colonel Gerald York, Deborah York, and Angie York. Please stand and be recognized.

Most of us know the story of Alvin C. York, but I mention it now to emphasize that Tennessee's success is no accident. Tennessee is America at its best because of the men and women who have made it that way.

In 2019, I stood in this chamber and said, "Tennessee can lead the nation."

Tonight – standing on the shoulders of giants who came before us – I say with great pride that Tennessee is leading the nation. And the state of our beloved state is prosperous, hopeful, and unrivaled.

Ford Motor Company could have picked any state in the country. Why did they choose to plant their roots in West Tennessee?

In-N-Out Burger – iconic family-run company...of all the states they could have picked, their new hub and first footprint east of Texas is coming to the Volunteer State. Why Tennessee?

Because, the American people know a leading state when they see one.

That's why people, families, and companies are moving here in record numbers.

Our investments in public education, and workforce development, and safe schools – and our commitment to freedom and to families – have all earned national recognition.

Our commitment to this high quality of life does not stop at the borders of our big cities. In fact, it begins in the most rural areas of our state. Thanks to that commitment, the number of distressed counties in Tennessee has dropped from 15 to 10, and we are not done.

And all of this has paid off in the form of thousands of new jobs and historic economic development – creating more opportunities for every Tennessean to have a better job, a better school for their kids, a safe neighborhood, a stronger family, and a brighter future.

So to continue leading the nation, I'm proposing a legislative agenda and a budget that will focus on the fundamentals that put our state in this enviable position in the first place.

Good Jobs + Opportunity

Tennessee has a legacy of fiscal responsibility that has allowed our state's economy to flourish. The same cannot be said for every state in this country. Economic pressure is building, it's hitting the pocket of every American family.

At times like this, many states are forced to choose between raising taxes or creating debt, but not Tennessee.

Decades of smart fiscal stewardship have enabled us not only to weather the national storms but do so while maintaining a healthy savings account and cutting taxes for Tennesseans.

So, this year, we're cutting taxes again.

Last August, we gave Tennessee families a one-month break from grocery taxes, to provide relief amid nationwide inflation. We should do that again this year, but let's extend it to three consecutive months.

I'm also introducing the Tennessee Works Act to deliver more than \$150 million in annual tax relief to small businesses and expand Tennessee's competitive edge for years to come.

When companies want to relocate, one of the things they look at is a state that can guarantee stability. And Tennessee's healthy Rainy-Day Fund is one of our greatest strengths in that endeavor. And the bottom line is, it enables us to recruit more companies and create more jobs all across Tennessee. That's why we're adding \$250 million to the state's Rainy-Day Fund this year.

Before I move on, regarding fiscal responsibility for decades, it's the General Assembly in this state has been committed to a balanced budget that also recognizes the priorities of Tennesseans. You should be commended for that, you should get credit for that, and I want to thank you for that.

In recent months, we have taken a closer look at transportation needs in this state, and I appreciate those of you who have engaged in the conversation thus far.

It's time to invest in a transportation strategy for one of the fastest growing states in the country. We cannot solve this problem with debt or higher taxes, but we have to do something.

Right now, there's a \$26 billion backlog of projects across the state. Simply put, we are way behind, and we have to change the way we fund and build our roads and our bridges.

We know that we have to tackle big, urban projects, but if we don't change our strategy, we also know who would end up paying the price – our rural communities.

That's why I'm introducing the Transportation Modernization Act – a plan to engage public-private partnerships to build additional choice lanes on urban highways, to ensure electric vehicle owners pay their share in maintaining our roads, and to provide a delivery model that builds rural and urban projects faster, all without the burden falling on Tennessee taxpayers.

And hear me when I say this: toll roads are not on the table.

We're talking about choice lanes, public-private partnerships, new delivery models – solutions that have worked for states all across the country, including our friends in Florida and Texas

In combination with this new strategy, we have to jumpstart the process, because we are so far behind – we need to make a major initial investment just to begin to catch up.

So, to alleviate urban congestion in our major cities and widen rural interstates across the state, we're proposing an additional \$3 billion to build roads in all three Grand Divisions in Tennessee.

And with that, along with that, we are also proposing another \$300 million into our local highway program, so that local communities can build and maintain the roads they need.

And here's the bottom line – there is a great cost to doing nothing.

We can easily kick the can down the road for four more years, but Tennesseans will pay the price for it with more potholes, longer commutes, and less economic activity.

We have an obligation to prepare our state for the future, and the time to do so is now.

Our state's economic success can also be measured by the number of jobs created – 170,000 new jobs in just four years.

Now, our workforce pipeline must keep up.

Pathways to success don't look the same for every Tennessean, and they shouldn't. For many, a certification from one of our Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology will open just the right doors.

Since 2019, we've prioritized TCAT construction across this state, so more Tennesseans can kickstart a great career close to home. Today, nearly 9 out of 10 graduates from a TCAT get a job in the field they studied.

This year, I propose that we complete Tennessee's TCAT Master Plan. To do that, we'll expand and improve 16 existing TCATs, replace seven outdated facilities, and build six brand new TCATs at strategic locations across our state.

Our goal with that is to train 10,000 new skilled workers a year. To achieve this, we're proposing \$1 billion in this budget – the largest investment in our technical colleges in state history.

Meaningful work certainly does change lives, and we don't have to look very far to see the results.

Tonight, we're joined by Brad Barnard. Brad has lived in Morristown, Tennessee his whole life and worked at a local stamping factory for 33 years, but he wanted more out of his career.

Brad was first introduced to TCAT Morristown in 2015 through an apprenticeship opportunity, and in 2021, he decided to enroll full time and earn his diploma. Now, at a young 54-years old, Brad is enjoying a second career as a programmer with McNeilus Steel Incorporated, a company that we recruited to Tennessee in 2019.

This is why we invest in TCATs. This is why we recruit great companies to Tennessee. Please join me in congratulating Brad Barnard on his success.

Great Schools + High-Quality Education

Access to career and technical education can change the trajectory of someone's life. We should expand those opportunities in our K-12 schools.

Starting with the GIVE Act four years ago, we've worked to create more vocational and STEM programs in classrooms across the state. And as a result, dual enrollment for high school students has nearly doubled. You've heard me say we should change the way high school looks in Tennessee, and we're well on our way to making that a reality.

Last year, we reformed the public school funding formula for the first time in 30 years and invested an historic amount to fund Tennessee students based on their individual needs. This year, I'm proposing an additional investment of \$350 million into the TISA formula, and that includes \$125 million for teacher pay raises.

When I came into office, the minimum pay for teachers was set at \$35,000. We are proposing legislation that, if it passes, will increase the minimum teacher pay, by the time I leave office, to \$50,000.

In just the last six months, there's hundreds of families living in underserved zip codes in our state that have had an opportunity to pick what they think is the best school for their child through our Education Savings Account program.

Our ESA program is changing lives, and states across the country are following Tennessee's lead.

I have always believed that we should strive to have the best public-school system in the country and provide choices for parents.

There are some who claim they have to choose either/or, but these two ideas are not in conflict. In fact, excelling in both is how we lead in education.

I want to introduce you to some Tennesseans who are proof of that idea.

Natalia Serrano, a fourth grader living here in Nashville, was struggling with reading and writing and rarely spoke in class.

Her parents and her older sister could see that she was on a failing path. They thought if they could just get her into a different school with smaller classes, that she would have a chance.

When we launched the ESA program, Natalia's family applied and were soon enrolled at Holy Rosary Academy. Just since last fall, Natalia has already jumped three reading levels. Her goals for this year are to read 30 minutes every day and to study hard for her weekly spelling tests. She also joined the choir and a Bible study.

Natalia found her voice.

And every child in this state deserves to have access to a high-quality education.

Please join me in welcoming Natalia Serrano and her family. We are so proud of you.

Tennessee is blessed with incredible public-school teachers and administrators. Just last month, Oakhaven High School in Memphis was in the national spotlight for their innovative

use of phonics learning in English, Math, and Science classes.

A few miles down the road, Dr. Vincent Hunter, Principal at Whitehaven High School in South Memphis, is leading a school that continues to exceed expectations.

Dr. Hunter, who is a Whitehaven graduate himself, serves a student body that is 99% African American. Under his leadership, the school has expanded dual enrollment, AP classes, foreign language courses.

Whitehaven is one of just three high schools in the whole district with a graduation rate of 90% or higher.

I had the honor of attending last year's spring graduation in Whitehaven and let me tell you, I'm really encouraged about the future leaders of Memphis and our state when I go to a school like Whitehaven.

You know, we have been in prayer, constant prayer, for the Nichols family since they tragically lost their son Tyree, last month. Their courage, their compassion, and the compassion shown by the people of Memphis, is a picture of hope.

The graduates of Whitehaven High School, who are defying the odds and chasing their dreams is a picture of hope.

Memphis is an exceptional city. I believe it has a bright future. And a bright future, is because of people like my friend, Vincent Hunter.

So, please join me in welcoming the Principal of Whitehaven High School, and his wife, Dr. Vincent Hunter. When it comes to learning loss, Tennessee has made great strides, but we have much that needs to be done.

We know the worst thing that we can do for a child's success is push them to the next level when they're simply not ready. Third-grade reading has been the most important indicator for parents and teachers to see that a child is struggling before it's too late.

As a parent – and hearing from educators across the state – I know this can be one of the largest challenges during the elementary school years. That's why our budget this year will prioritize new literacy programs, from tutoring to summer camps, and give students multiple pathways to becoming a strong reader.

The ability to read at grade level can determine a child's future. Our approach has to be about providing additional support, so that every student is set up for success in the classroom and beyond.

When it comes to education, funding, choices, and literacy are all important, but none of that matters more than your child coming home from school safe every day.

Since 2019, Tennessee has done a lot of work to strengthen school safety. We increased funding, we boosted mental health programs, we established a grant to place more than 200 School Resource Officers across the state.

Last year, I signed an executive order to engage parents and strengthen the relationship between schools and the local Tennessee Highway Patrol troopers who help watch over their

communities.

Every single person has a role to play in school safety. That's why we have a School Safety Toolkit for every parent, and we have the SafeTN App, where any Tennessean can report suspicious activity.

This year, we're doubling down with new legislation to enhance physical security in classrooms.

We're also proposing funding to place at least one Homeland Security Agent in each of our 95 counties.

And here's why: A few months ago, a student at a high school in West Tennessee noticed something suspicious. The student reported their concern in the SafeTN app, bringing it to the attention of one of our Homeland Security agents in the region. The agent pursued the tip, and we have strong reason to believe that this prevented a real threat from becoming a real tragedy.

Our review of the case showed that the SafeTN app worked, as long as a Homeland Security agent is available to take the case. These agents specialize in preventing acts of violence and terrorism, and we should enhance their role in our school safety strategy.

We have done a lot to make schools safer, but I do not want to look up months from now and think – we should've done more. I intend to make this a priority in this budget, and every year after this.

Safe Neighborhoods

We know that public safety doesn't stop there.

Whether we're protecting against the influence of the Chinese Communist Party or the dangers of a drug crisis stemming from an open border, we must continue to have a voice in national security when the safety of Tennesseans is at stake.

And we will never stop investing in the safety of Tennesseans.

Our \$100 million Violent Crime Intervention Grant Fund is already being used by 80% of local law enforcement agencies all across the state. I propose that we invest another \$50 million to keep that program going.

We added 100 Tennessee Highway Patrol troopers in the budget last year. This year, we're adding 100 more troopers.

And ahead of this budget, we worked with the General Assembly to create 25 new forensic lab positions to help the TBI reduce the turnaround time for test kits.

And we're also investing in District Attorneys, with additional funding for staff and a statewide system upgrade, so they can take dangerous criminals to trial and ensure that justice is served.

Strong Families

There was a significant shift in this country last year when it comes to protecting the lives of the unborn. We now all have an opportunity and a moral obligation to support strong

Tennessee families.

Pro-life is much more than defending the lives of the unborn.

At this point in the address Lee was interrupted by shouts of protest

This is not a matter of politics. This is about human dignity. This is about human dignity. We can have a healthy debate. Civility is not a weakness by the way, it is a strength. And we can and should have, a healthy debate about the policy specifics, but we can all agree that America is rooted in a commitment to human dignity.

I'm talking about the dignity of the expecting working mother who's got multiple jobs to make ends meet, the dignity of a baby born three months early, or a father living with a disability, or a family in crisis.

Just a minute ago, I said we have an opportunity to support families, and I have some very important news for all of us to share tonight.

Two years ago, at the request of the General Assembly, we secured an historic TennCare Medicaid waiver agreement – the only federally-approved waiver of its kind in the nation.

Our waiver actually rewards a state for efficient, responsible management of taxpayer resources by awarding additional federal dollars – known as shared savings – to serve the most vulnerable. I want to thank our TennCare Director Stephen Smith for his remarkable leadership in working with the federal government, at your request, to secure this waiver.

I've said all along, we would only move forward with this waiver if it was a good deal for Tennesseans. Tonight, I can share that we have claimed the first returns from this program, and not only did we get a good deal, we got a great deal.

For the first year alone, Tennessee will receive more than \$300 million of shared savings, at no additional burden to Tennessee taxpayers.

We always believed in our strategy, but this result is a gamechanger.

In the last four years, we have extended postpartum care for mothers to 12 months, we provided support for thousands more Tennesseans who are living with disabilities, we offered comprehensive dental benefits for TennCare recipients for the first time in the state's history. Now, with a pro-family landscape in the background, using just the savings from this first year, we will further strengthen postpartum coverage, providing services to over 5,000 more mothers, close the coverage gap for parents, and reach an additional 10,000 children – in total, offering services to nearly 25,000 more women, children, and parents in need.

In addition, Tennessee has the opportunity to ease one of the biggest financial burdens on mothers. We are going to propose covering the cost of diapers during the first two years of a baby's life for mothers on TennCare.

If that is approved, Tennessee will be the first Medicaid program in the nation to implement this kind of support. That is pro-life. That is pro-family.

And, with continued responsible management of our TennCare program, we believe that that

this level of savings is possible for years to come, and as such we will work together with the General Assembly to develop a vision for TennCare's future.

We have the opportunity – together – to expand more services, reach more families in need, and improve rural health care access all across our state.

Despite enormous criticism from those who said we couldn't or wouldn't, we are going to do exactly what we said we would do when we pursued this shared savings waiver – expand services for the most vulnerable and provide those services to even more Tennesseans. And now that day has come.

In Tennessee, we value the dignity of a foster child who longs for a loving home, the dignity of a mother who simply cannot raise a child alone, or a couple whose prayers for a child have not yet been answered.

Last fall, we began working anew with our partners in the General Assembly to address the growing challenges in serving at-risk children in Tennessee, and quite frankly, across the country.

The needs of Tennessee children have evolved, and our approach to serving them must evolve too.

We've built a team at our Department of Children's Services that is ready to move forward and provide better services. Our new commissioner, Margie Quin, brings decades of expertise working with the most vulnerable populations in our state, in her service with the TBI and anti-human trafficking non-profits.

With Commissioner Quin at the helm, we've already hired dozens of new, qualified caseworkers. DCS caseworkers have an incredibly difficult job, and they deserve our support. Last year, we provided two pay raises for caseworkers, and I intend to boost their pay again in this budget.

And we are also proposing more than \$190 million in additional resources to support the mission of DCS and provide for the safety and well-being of Tennessee children.

There is a lot more work to be done, but I believe we have the right plan and the right team in place to get it done. This is all part of our broader strategy to support strong Tennessee families, and we have big goals.

In 2021, we launched Tennessee Fosters Hope. This year, I'm proposing a new \$10 million grant program to support the mission of foster and adoption nonprofits all across our state.

Last year, Tennessee's budget funded ultrasound machines at crisis pregnancy clinics all across the state. This year, I'm proposing a \$100 million grant program to partner with nonprofits that serve mothers, fathers, and families during a crisis pregnancy.

With that, our Office of Faith-Based Initiatives has a unique ability – and an important opportunity – to engage nonprofits and community organizations. I believe it's time to equip them with the resources they need to play a bigger role, as we endeavor to better serve children and families.

From strengthening DCS to expanding care for families, these challenges are not easy. But if we start from our commitment to human dignity, we will get it done.

Strong families in fact are the building blocks of society – in our communities, in our state and our country. The love and support that fills tight-knit home spreads out, building up neighborhoods, churches, volunteer organizations, and all the other institutions that help bind us together.

One way we can support and strengthen families is by making it possible for parents to be there, worry-free, for every second of those first months of life. If we can strengthen the bond between parents and children from the very first moments, we will have truly done something important.

That's why I am proposing a commonsense paid parental-leave program for state employees who are growing their family.

This is not a mandate on businesses. I believe every business owner should make decisions that are in the best interest of their employees.

Our state workers are critical to Tennessee's success. That's why we increased the base pay for state employees last fall, and we intend to issue more raises this year.

A reasonable paid leave program will help us retain the best and brightest and help those who help our state, resulting in stronger families all across Tennessee.

Brighter Future

From Mountain City to Memphis, our state is blessed with beauty and natural rich resources.

As a kid growing up in Tennessee, I remember going to Fall Creek Falls State Park with my family. And last year, Maria and I took our grandchildren to camp in Cumberland Mountain State Park. When our grandchildren are our age, I'd sure like them to visit state parks with their grandkids.

Our state parks are a jewel, and they'll only be around for the future if we invest in them today.

Through the years, Tennessee has maintained responsible stewardship of our natural resources, but it's time to develop a conservation strategy that balances our state's economic growth with a plan to protect our environment.

I believe that Tennessee's vision for conservation can start like this:

The most accessible park system in the nation – regardless of your zip code or your physical ability, or demographics, you and your family should be able to enjoy outdoor experiences close to home.

To achieve that, my budget proposal will improve and expand three additional state natural areas, build two new park lodges, complete four more outdoor trails, and create four new state parks.

Across Tennessee, we have 175 former industrial sites, called brownfields, where toxic waste has created the potential for environmental hazard. I believe we owe it to the people of

Tennessee to clean this up.

I'm proposing legislation to revitalize all 175 brownfields – to restore them environmentally, to prepare them for future use, and to make them safe for our great-grandchildren.

This is the start of a conservation strategy, and we have much to do in the years to come.

If we really want to contribute to the future of America's environment, we should contribute to the advancement of clean energy.

As Washington debates an agenda that overregulates or pushes the burden on everyday people, Tennessee is looking for real solutions through innovation.

We have a solution that is cheap, clean, and reliable.

No other state in the country comes close to Tennessee's legacy, resources, and potential to be a leader in nuclear energy. And there is no long-term national strategy that doesn't include nuclear energy.

That's why, tonight, I'm proposing \$50 million in a Nuclear Fast Track fund to recruit companies to our state that will specifically establish a nuclear development and manufacturing ecosystem built for the future of Tennessee.

We cannot not pass up this opportunity. Tennessee can and should be the leader in nuclear energy for America.

Closing

As Governor, I have the privilege of traveling all across the state and meeting Tennesseans from all walks of life.

Last fall, I met a man in Crossville who had just moved his family here all the way from New York. He said to me, "When I moved to Tennessee, I felt like I'd moved back to America."

In many ways, our country is off track. But America's best days are not behind her.

If the rest of the country can learn one thing from leading states like Tennessee, it's that when you trust your people, you'll succeed. The most elite, most educated people don't always know best – the everyday American people know best.

We've had crises in the last few years that have challenged that notion, but as long as we believe in 'We the People', our country will stay on this imperfect path to a more perfect union.

Tennesseans have accomplished remarkable things in our 226-year history. Once again, we are being called to be a guiding light and carry the spirit that took our state from frontier to frontrunner.

So, as I look ahead to the next four years – with four very challenging, yet fruitful years in the rearview – I can see that we've arrived at a pivotal point.

After winning the battle in 1918, Sergeant York and his seven men marched back to American lines. York reported to his brigade commander, and in an effort to explain the unbelievable victory that he had just secured, York humbly said, "A higher power than man guided and

watched over me.”

Perhaps, the greatest lesson in Sergeant York’s story is not found in his heroic actions on the battlefield, but in his incredible humility and in the way he served after that – when he returned home to rural Tennessee and relentlessly used his own success to make life better for future generations.

As leaders, may we all be inspired to serve in that way.

In my very first state of the state, I said, “If we lead Tennessee well, Tennessee may well lead the nation.”

Tennessee is leading. The question is, will we lead in a way that lasts – in a way that our grandchildren are equipped and inspired to pick up where we left off?

I believe that we can, and I look forward to pursuing that with all of you, this year and three more years after that. May the Lord continue to pour out his favor and bless the people of the great state of Tennessee.

Thank you, and Goodnight.

Thereupon, the purpose for which the Joint Convention was called having been accomplished, Mr. President Sexton declared the Joint Convention dissolved.